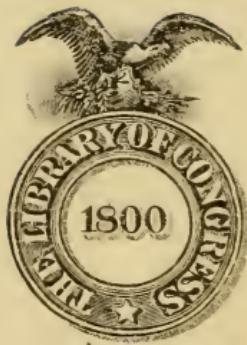


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THE OLD WISCONSE

By WILLIAM ELLIS

THE PHILOSOPHER PRESS, WAUSAU,
WISCONSIN, JUNE, M D C C C X C I X



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This poem was written for, and originally published in, The Northwestern Lumberman, and to its publisher, Mr. W. B. Judson, acknowledgement for its use is made by The Philosopher Press.

THE OLD
WISCONSE

The Old Wisconse

An' so ye think the Old Wisconse 's a mighty
pretty stream?

A tumblin' 'round among the rocks, an'
sparklin' with the gleam

Of sunshine fallin' through the spray, like
di'monds in the hair

Of women who seem bent to see what gewgaws
they kin wear?

Well, yes, she is a pretty stream. leastwise she
is to me—

But laws—I've seen the days when 'deed she
was a stream to see.

She aint no-ways the crick she was way back in
early days,

With lots of camps an' loggers all along her
windin' ways.

The Old Wisconsin

The railroad seems to kind o' knock the beauty
from the scene,

The birds don't seem to harmonize with
sizz'lin screechin' steam;

There aint no livin' railroad that can run a piece
o' wood,

An' do the sense of nature in a man a bit of
good.

It kind o' takes the tuck clean out a quiet,
peaceful stream,

To see the world go rushin' by behind the push
of steam.

An' when it comes to foliage, bright with all its
autumn shades,

You can't get that from wire-strung poles cut
out from forest glades.

The Old Wisconse

You folks don't know the Old Wisconse,
a-ridin' by in cars;

A-leavin' Tomah when the sun's just kissin' out
the stars.

An' gett'n' up to Tomahawk along at sun-high
noon—

That's goin' up the Old Wisconse a heap o'
sight too soon.

You can't see where she glides out from the
overhangin' trees—

That smile upon her as they bow beneath the
gentle breeze:

You can't see where the waters dash up into angry
foam

Against the rocks that seem to try to stop them
as they foam.

The Old Wisconse

I mind the time—it's years ago—I started from
the P'nt,

An' got along to Joe Dessert's to stay for over-
night,

An' thanked my lucky stars an' all the gods I
ever had,

That I had got a chance to sleep one more night
in a bed;

'Cause I was on my way clear up to seven-thirty-
three,

An' I knew that was nigh the last of livin' I
should see,

Yes, bless your soul, I looked the land all over
this here stream

Long 'fore they ever had a mill that used a pound
of steam.

The Old Wisconse

An' when a feiler's got his house all strapped
across his back,

An' starts out in the woods to tramp without a
sign of track,

With heaven's great, broad, blue, deep sky the
only roof he's got,

An' sweetly smellin' boughs of pine to be his
only cot,

He somehow gets a long ways nearer to what God
had ought to be,

Than you can get in any church that I have ever
see :

An' I do n't b'lieve you ever heerd such songs
of music sweet

As comes from God's bright songsters in the
wildest wood's retreat.

The Old Wisconse

Somehow you get away from things that bother
up the mind,

An' then you can't help thinkin' things a mighty
different kind

Than when the rush of saw-mills an' the crash of
railroad trains

Keep business deals and figgers hustlin', bustlin'
through yer brains:

An, somehow when ye get alone, away out in the
pines,

Ye think of things ye wouldn't think at any
other times.

An' on such trips as these, alone, in days long
years ago,

The Old Wisconse an' me was friends, as on
her way she flowed.

The Old Wisconsin

An' then she was a pretty stream—shy like a
modest maid,

She'd peep out from a glassy pool beneath a
forest glade,

Then coy she'd dance along awhile, as gay as
any girl,

An' then she'd break out in the gayest, maddest,
merriest swirl,

An' dash down over rocks an' stones, as mad as
any shrew,

An', 'shamed-like, on she'd float away in quiet,
placid blue.

Oh, she was like a woman in them good old by-
gone days—

She had her failin's, true to tell, but she had
her winnin' ways.

The Old Wisconse

But now her beauty's most all gone; she's broken
down by work.

For, what with all her loveliness, the Wisconse
aint no shirk;

She's toted down the saw-logs that was once her
life an' pride,

She's turned the wheels of saw-mills, that have
sprung up by her side;

She's give her wealth of water to the clouds for
gentle rain

That bathes the land in plenty so it brings forth
fruit again;

She waits in prison-cage dams for the drive the
saw-mills need,

While beauty fades and glory dies to satisfy
man's greed.

The Old Wisconse

But then, she's still the Old Wisconse, an'
still she's dear to me :

I love her for the long years past ; for what she
used to be :

An' now I s'pose she's worth the more, with
all her towns an' mills ;

The whistles mean more business than the wild
birds' sweetest trills.

But I can't help rememb'rin' how she looked
long years ago .

When through the untouched timber was the path
she used to flow,

An' 'taint no use a talkin', them there was the
days for me—

The Old Wisconse wont never seem the crick
she used to be.







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